

solitude sails in a wave of forgiveness by Tangerina

Series: [seven different ways](#) [2]

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

Genre: Canon - Book & Movie Combination, Catharsis, Character Study, Childhood Trauma, Gen, Implied/Referenced Child Abuse, Important Hair Change, Nightmares, The Losers Club (IT) Love Each Other, Underage Drinking, Underage Smoking, Young sapphic feelings (not the focus i'm sorry)

Language: English

Characters: Alvin Marsh (mentioned), Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Beverly Marsh's Aunt, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Elfrida Marsh, Jessica Hanlon, Mike Hanlon, Original Female Character, Pennywise (IT) (Mentioned), Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris

Relationships: The Losers Club & Beverly Marsh

Status: Completed

Published: 2019-12-01

Updated: 2019-12-01

Packaged: 2019-12-19 02:01:51

Rating: Mature

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 14,156

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

(it still was too easy to let go of herself – pretend the whispers in the school corridor weren't about her, pretend the look on her father's face on the portrait her mother kept on the wall didn't scare her – but when she looked at the scar on her hand, bev could believe that it was better to open her eyes instead of shutting them. only for a minute. from minute to minute, she could one day heal herself.)

or, bev learns that being strong doesn't mean being unbreakable.

solitude sails in a wave of forgiveness

Author's Note:

warnings! besides everything that is already tagged, this work contains

- bad language (of course)
- the use of misogynistic slurs
- a man being creepy to a teenager girl

so, richie's work took place in 1992, but this one has a lot of time skips. we'll begin in 1989 and end in 1993. what a ride.

thank you @DuendeJunior for beta-reading one more work of mine i love yooou

Bev thought it was too easy to let go of herself.

She would close her eyes and pretend that everything was happening to someone else, in some other place. She would close her eyes and sing inside her head. She would close her eyes so she wouldn't have to look at her father's face, looming too close to hers. *One minute more*, she thought to herself. From minute to minute, she was able to sustain all the time he used to humiliate her. *You just need to take this for a minute more*, she used to think, closing her eyes as he hit her. When it was over, she would go and hide anywhere, a hurt animal, licking her own wounds. Sometimes, her mother came home and found her shrunken in the corner of the room. Elfrida hugged her and told her how much she loved her daughter. Bev knew this, but Bev also wondered if she couldn't love her just a little bit more, just enough for freeing her from the chains of horror of Alvin Marsh's domain.

He was dead now.

Elfrida never blamed her. She would never – if anything, Bev imagined her mother blamed herself. She remembered a day, when

she was eleven, her mother asking her if Alvin had ever *touched* her, and then the look of relief on Elfrida's face when Bev was confused by the question. Bev didn't want to feel resentment, but now that she understood what was truly behind it, she couldn't avoid the bitterness that bit her heart. No, no inappropriate touches under her skirt, only the proper ones, mom: bruises on her cheek, pain in her stomach, red marks on her arms. What a comfort! No inappropriate touches, only the ghost feeling of them, the almost that had her on nerves – his breathing close to her eyelids, his lips hovering on hers. *I worry about you, Bevvie*, he had said too many times. *Are you still my little girl?*, fingers lingering on her waist.

Alvin was dead, Elfrida was sick. No more leftovers from the restaurant she worked. Only the sweet smell of disease, of things going rot. Her house wasn't as haunted as it once was – she could invite her boys over, and Elfrida would smile to them and tell them to take care of her dear Bev –, but it was not as welcoming as it could have been if he had never entered it in the first place.

Funny thing, if Alvin had never met Elfrida, she would have never been born. His bad blood also ran in her veins. The idea always came back on the worst days – it was her fault the way he behaved, it was her fault he was dead, it was her fault, everything, anything. It was her fault that her mom was so sad. It was her fault that she and Bill fell out of love after the summer of '89. It was her fault – insert here whatever came in her mind when she was feeling like that.

And on top of everything, the nightmares. She couldn't close her eyes on them, she had to watch her father become It and It become her father, she had to watch all the walls turning red again and again, red, red, red, she had to hear the whispers telling her that she belonged to the sewers, that she shouldn't have left, that they were all waiting for her to come back. Blood, blood on the walls, blood on Alvin's face, blood on Stan's wrists.

When she woke up from the bad dreams, she always turned on the light and looked at the scar on her hand. She touched and kissed it, pressed it against her face and her heart, like it could take all the bad things away. Blood wasn't always bad. Blood could mean home. A family with blood ties, but that did not share the same blood. A family of her choice.

(it still was too easy to let go of herself – pretend the whispers in the school corridor weren't about her, pretend the look on her father's face on the portrait her mother kept on the wall didn't scare her – but when she looked at the scar on her hand, Bev could believe that it was better to open her eyes instead of shutting them. only for a minute. from minute to minute, she could one day heal herself.)

They shared a kiss before she went to Portland.

Elfrida wanted her to be away from Derry for a while. She spent a month or so with her aunt. Elspeth was nothing at all like her twin sister: she wasn't married and she lived with a woman – a friend, Elfrida had said, but Beverly noticed that Elspeth and her friend shared the same room, and the looks on their faces were not friendly ones. Elspeth and Elfrida had almost not talked for the time Alvin was alive, as he disapproved of Elspeth's way of living. Bev loved it: she was a journalist, a woman with an opinion about everything, she asked Bev if she could hug her and if Bev said she was not feeling like it, Elspeth would just smile sadly and nod.

Elspeth could be Elfrida's twin, but Bev saw so many different expressions on her face, expressions that never crossed her mom's. Anger, for example. Everytime Elfrida called and Elspeth tried to speak in a low voice about how she could have been so irresponsible, letting her daughter home alone with a freak. Elspeth's "friend", a doctor called Sandra, made Bev hot chocolate and sat by her side, waiting for Elspeth and Elfrida to be done fighting. Bev liked Sandra a lot. She had something so soothing about her, something that reminded her of Mike.

One day, Sandra asked about her friends. It was one of Bev's bad days, and Sandra was usually the first to notice them. Bev told her about Ben, and Eddie, and Richie, and Mike, and Stan and – she felt her face blush when she mentioned Bill. The kiss, blood still on her hand, then on his face. Sandra didn't ask anything more, but had a look on her face that made Bev want to explain that it was not like that. But no adult knew what they have been through, so she couldn't give any explanation. Sandra was great, but she probably wouldn't understand how it was to almost die by the hands of a hellish

creature. If Bev was going to talk to her about monsters, her father was the safest option.

She wanted to see Bill again, to see if she would still feel the same shiver down her spine when she caught him looking at her direction. Bev closed her eyes, listening to Sandra and Elspeth listening to music. *Keep your head together and call my name out loud, soon you'll hear me knocking at your door.* The softness of it made her want to cry. She pictured Bill's face inside her head. His auburn hair, autumn-ish, his dark blue eyes, the way he looked too sad sometimes, so sad that only Richie was capable of making him smile. She pictured his face and imagined if what she was feeling was love.

She knew the way he looked at her. Maybe that was what made her drawn to him. The way men looked at her was a recognizable one, but she didn't feel afraid when was Bill's gaze. He didn't make her panic or too conscious about her appearance. He didn't ask anything from her. Bill kissed her, and then she kissed him, because it was what she wanted, and when she came home she felt like flying away.

Could it be love? From her perspective, love wasn't so nice. Her father told her that he loved her, and it always felt like a threat rather than a promise. From her perspective, love was something she had to give, and give, and give, something that took away bits of her. Love was a pretending game – she won if she pretended it wasn't hurting, she wasn't crying, she was smiling because she wanted it, she wasn't afraid. If she made things right, if she followed every step, her prize was to pretend for a little longer that she could belong to herself.

After she got back to Derry – carrying a bag of homemade cookies by Sandra and all the promises Elspeth made of calling and visiting – she hugged her mother and pretended that she missed home. It was something easy to do, just an extension of the play she used to act in those days where Elfrida, Alvin and Beverly sat together to lunch, with Elfrida asking about school, Alvin quietly staring at her and Beverly avoiding his gaze, trying to focus on her mom instead on the way his leg brushed hers under the table.

Elfrida told her that they were going to be fine. Beverly pretended to

believe.

The next day, she went to the only place she was really missing. The clubhouse. She was alone there, touching the walls, caressing magazines on the floor. If she tried hard enough, she could still smell the scent of the Losers on the air. Maybe they were there the day before. She wanted to see them, but it was hard – Bev missed them like a piece of her heart was gone, but to look at them was to remember everything that happened that summer.

And there was Bill, of course, and the unnerving feeling on her chest every time she thought of him. Then, she took the only reasonable course of action: went straight to his house. Bev didn't like to feel that weird way around someone she knew she could trust. Someone she liked to be around. *I would have died for him*, she remembered.

"B-B-Bev!," his happiness was palpable. He moved to hug her, and then stopped. She felt both relieved and – and what? She noticed that she didn't want to kiss him anymore, not the same way they did by the Barrens.

Maybe Bill was waiting for her permission to do so. Or maybe he didn't want to.

"I came back yesterday, sorry for not telling you guys. I needed time to unpack my things," she gave him a tiny smile. Bill closed the door behind them.

"It's okay, I unders-unders-understand."

They stared at each other for a long time. She hated being nervous around him, and she hated that he too was nervous. It wasn't supposed to be like that.

"So....," Bev looked at a point behind Bill's head. Pretend, pretend. If this wasn't happening to her, if this was a television show, what would she expect to see? Bev hated how much the characters kept from each other. Everything could be solved with a good ol' talk. In real life, getting the words out of your chest was a little bit trickier. Bev used to be so good at this. Where was her fierceness?

“Wanna seat?,” Bill indicated the sidewalk.

Bev and Bill sat side by side, silence washing over them. There was distance between their bodies. “Can you believe my aunt didn’t let me watch any horror movies on the telly?,” Bev said, instead of all the things that were crossing her mind. She saw Bill’s body relaxing by her side.

“If she o-only knew she had a de-de-demon slayer on her house.”

“I know, right? I could have told her I’ve seen things that she wouldn’t believe.”

“I mi-missed you, Bev,” his honesty caught her off guard. She let it wash the bad feelings in her chest. She didn’t feel the urge to kiss him, and he didn’t try anything, and she was glad for that.

“Missed you too, weirdo,” she bumped his arm.

In the end, they didn’t talk about what happened between them. It was for the best, Bev concluded. Some things were best implied than stated, and she was good at reading between the lines.

“Kid, come here.”

They all looked. Jessica Hanlon sighed, a little smile on her lips. She pointed to Bev. Bev, surprised, felt her ears turn red. Had she done something wrong? Something disrespectful? The Hanlons were always the best with them. It didn’t matter that Mike’s farm was a bit far from the city. After all, Mike always went wherever they wanted to go. It was only fair they made their way to his home too.

Besides that, the Hanlons were really nice. Always made them feel welcomed, always gave them space.

“Hi, Mrs. Hanlon,” Bev whispered, looking at the floor. They were on the kitchen. She imagined Richie trying to hear the conversation while Stan held him in place. Jessica was sitting on the dining table, and indicated the chair in front of her. Bev sat there, quietly. She wasn’t afraid the way she got afraid when her dad asked to talk to her. On those times, she felt fear freezing her insides. She tried to

never look at him, thinking that if he caught something in her eyes that he didn't like it would be excuse enough for hit her a little harder.

For a second, she thought Jessica would ask her to stop hanging out with Mike – a reminder that if something happened to her while the two of them were alone, no one would see two kids having fun, only a girl and a target.

“Hi, Miss Marsh,” Jessica’s voice was soft. No, not soft – her soft tone was for Mike’s ears only. But it was friendly. “I saw what happened on the news.”

“Oh.”

“Tell you something,” Jessica pondered. Bev risked a glance to her. There was something royal about Jessica Hanlon’s shoulders, the way she held herself. Bev envied that a little, thinking about Elfrida, shrinking on her own house. But it made complete sense. The Hanlons were a perfect match, they loved each other and had each other’s back. Elfrida and Alvin had nothing like that. “If he hadn’t died there, I would have him killed. I would do it, or Will would do it. Didn’t matter.”

Now Bev looked at her, surprised. Jessica put a hand over hers.

“I can’t imagine what you’ve been through living in that house, but I know the cruelty of men. No child should bear something like that.”

Bev imagined Elfrida saying those words to her. On the aftermath of that summer, Elfrida sent her away for a while and Bev began to imagine if her mother couldn’t stand the sight of her, not for the reason Bev thought – regret –, but for something much more unsettling – anger. When she came back, Elfrida hugged her tightly, and kissed her head, and told her that she would never have to feel afraid again. But Alvin had let his marks on Elfrida Marsh, and Bev knew that there were things that could not be washed away.

“Thank you,” her voice was small.

“You don’t have to thank me. There is another thing. I won’t offer my

ears to you because you have my son's love and that is the most blessed thing I can think of," pride sparkled in her eyes. "But if you ever need something from an adult – any kind of help, truly. Me and Will are here for you."

Bev felt tears in her eyes, but she didn't shed them. Elspeth and Sandra were good for her, but they were away. The Toziers were awesome parents, and were nice to them, but they tended to avoid problems that didn't involve Richie – and they weren't wrong for that. Arlene was also great, but she had to work all day and tried to rest on the spare time. Donald and Andrea didn't engage on their son's life, although they were gentle to him. As for Sonia and the Denbroughs, well. When you don't have anything good to say, say nothing at all.

She felt, for a second, how it was to be raised with the right type of affection. "Now go before Mike comes here thinking that I'm scaring you."

Bev stood up. She bowed a little, unthinkingly. "Thank you so much."

"Anytime, kid."

"You're just great in that movie," Richie said. She threw popcorn at him.

"Pretend that those popcorns are daggers, like I'm picturing inside my head."

They were watching *The Breakfast Club* at Stan's house. Bev loved the Uris residence. It was big, it was clean. The walls were painted in a blue that was almost white. There were never clothes hanging on the couch. There was always plenty of food in the fridge. The windows were big, sunlight everywhere you looked. It was a nice, comfortable house. Donald and Andrea were nice to them.

"If I turn back and there is popcorn in the couch, you two are gonna pay for it," Stan said, eyes fixed on the television. Bev and Richie exchanged looks, trying to contain the chuckles and proceeded to search the sofa for hidden popcorn.

The scene where John Bender tried to sneak a peak of Claire's underwear always put her on a bad mood. She realized that she didn't even see it pass – Richie had called her just at the right moment. Bev thanked him in her thoughts. A funny thing about Richie Tozier was how oblivious he seemed to be, but they were friends for only a year and he had noticed things about her that she never had to communicate out loud. Richie never touched her without warning, he stopped making his so common sexual jokes around her. He never talked about girls he liked, but on that matter, none of them did. Bev wondered why was that. They were losers, of course, it would be really difficult for someone to notice how nice her boys were.

Her boys.

There was something about that, too. She watched Claire and Allison interact on screen. Bev pondered how would it be if there was another girl on the group. Would she be jealous? Would she be glad? Richie once said that she was a hell of a cool guy, and she giggled and felt conflicting emotions. She felt special, different, she felt she belonged with them, she felt somehow avenged for the fact that the girls in her class hated her, after all, she was more like a guy. But she also felt ashamed, sad. Deep down, Bev wondered if being a girl was being less than, in some way. Certainly there were no ill meaning behind Richie's words, but Bev still thought about them.

The truth was that she didn't want to be one of the guys. She loved her boys, but she didn't like men in general. They made her feel afraid, unsafe. She remembered the cops that talked to her after what happened with her father. They asked her questions that she only felt capable to answer because she pretended she was seeing everything from outside. That day, the only person who was nice to her was a young black officer. He sat by her side and told Bev that nothing bad would happen to her, it was clearly a situation of self-defense. Still, even if she met good ones, the majority of them seemed to be more like Henry Bowers than like Mike Hanlon.

She wouldn't trade her friends for anything in the world, but her reputation lowered even more after she started hanging out with them. Greta Bowie and her poisoned words, writing on the walls of the bathroom that Beverly Marsh was a cunt. Sally Mueller asking her

which of them had the biggest dick. Marcia Fadden telling her that she should have her blood tested for pregnancy or sexual diseases.

Bev pretended it didn't affect her, and then she would always met with Ben and his sweet smile or Stan and his protective presence and would know, deep in her bones, that mean words like that would never be stronger than the bond between them.

But to have a friend that was also a girl would have been really nice, too.

"You mess with Bev about Ringwald, but she's more a Allison type of girl," Mike said after a moment.

"He means Bev's *rad*," Eddie stated, shaking his head for emphasis. Bev giggled.

"You're damn right I am, Kaspbrak," her voice was joyful. Eddie winked at her. Bev looked at Ally Sheedy, her black hair and black clothes. Bev liked colors in her outfits and her hair was the exact same color of Ringwald's, but she knew they were talking about posture. That made her feel good. She liked Claire, but Ally was a much more interesting character.

Even if this wanting to have other girl to talk to never went away completely, Bev knew she was good. As long as she had them, she was good.

She woke up screaming.

Never a loud scream – she had learn to shut her mouth up when her father taught her a lesson, as he phrased it. It was more a sound of surprise, that was followed by the uncontrollable need to throw up. Nightmares, nightmares. Everything red, her whole body covered in blood. This time, Stan wasn't the one dying: she saw Richie throw himself in front of a bus, a smile on his face, looking directly at her, mouthing *you did this*. Blood, everywhere.

Bev shuddered in silence between her sheets. Her hands were cold.

She killed her own father. It was evident to her that if someday all of

her friends died in terrible ways it would also be her fault. Bev felt weak. A part of her was sure that if she talked about those things with the Losers, it would get better. There was nothing to do about nightmares besides waiting for them to be over, but everything was easier when you had someone by your side.

But how could she tell them that she had nightmares about their deaths? It had been two years since they fought it. She knew that they would never forget a horror like that, but it seemed so unfair to them, to ask for support when all they wanted was to forget the summer of '89 had ever happened.

She got up from bed and went to the living room, stopping by her mother's bedroom door. She closed her eyes and listened to Elfrida snoring. And then, she walked to the phone. It was thirty past midnight. Bev thought about them, sleeping peacefully in their beds. She wanted to call Richie, so she could ask him to crack a joke to make the bad feelings go away. She wanted to call Bill, so she could tell him that she was not feeling well and ask him to tell her a story. She wanted to call Stan, so she could tell him that she was too nervous and ask him to talk to her about his favorite birds.

Bev couldn't call any of them, not really, because their parents would be mad, so she sat down and pressed her scar against her heart, imagining what they would say to her if she told them about what was going on inside her head.

(eddie would probably hug her the way he did when they got out of the neibolt house, the first one to do so. he was crying and she let herself cry too. they were tired and stinking and every single one of them had tears streaming down their faces, making a clean way surrounded by dirt. mike had his forehead on stan's shoulder, both of them gently shaking, while ben caressed stan's hair, he too sobbing. richie and bill, best friends for life, were also hugging, arms tight around each other.

she remembered that feeling, the feeling of having survived horrible, unimaginable things, the feeling of seeing the daylight after hours in the darkness, the way the sun warmed her skin. and eddie there, by her side. taking something from her – comfort – and giving

something in return – understanding.

if she told them – if she told him – he would be gentle, as he always was. but again, bev thought about how exhausted they were and how glad they all became when it was all over. it was not her place to start it again. she'd rather suffer alone than to let her friends go through it one more time.)

Her eyes closed, she drifted away while lying on the floor.

Cigarettes were one of the best things in the world, and she smoked them since she was ten. Alcohol was a whole new thing. The taste was awful. Too strong, too sweet, too sour. She and Richie scrounged together their first bottles. Bev, talking to the cashier, pretending to flirt, and Richie sneaking behind with the most colorful stuff he could find. They usually tasted like soap.

“Beeeeeerv,” his voice was lazy. She kinda liked the way Richie was when he was drunk. Richie was full of life, and that was great, and he was probably her best friend, which was an amusing feeling, taking in consideration that all her friends were her best friends, and he was always so fast, they had to run to keep up with him. When he was drunk, he slowed down. “Do you love me?”

“No,” she answered. Richie made an outrageous noise and she laughed. “Maybe a little bit.”

I feel fine and I feel good, I'm feeling like I never should, the voice of Bernard Summer echoed on Richie's room and inside her. Bev and Richie were side by side, not touching. She extended her arm and put it over his. Richie turned his head to her. She stayed still.

Bev was good at recognizing intentions behind expressions. When Alvin had his lips twisted, she knew he was angry and she was better staying away. When Bill looked at her when they were younger, wonder in his eyes, she knew he desired something from her and she wanted to give it. Richie used to look at her with that same wanting. Not anymore, though. That gave her tranquility.

"Do you love," he paused. Bev opened her eyes. "Billiam?"

"You don't need to be jealous."

"I'm not jealous! I know you love me more."

"I wasn't talking about me," Bev turned to look at Richie. She smiled. Richie's cheeks were pink. They probably drank too much.

"And Ben?"

"Why, I hadn't noticed that this was an interrogatory."

"I'm just curious about your heart," despite his smile, Bev could see that Richie's eyes were serious. "You need to give it to someone who will treat you kindly."

"You?," she asked. Her voice was soft. She knew she and Richie were beyond that type of relationship, that's why was so easy to talk to him like that. She put Ben on the back of her mind. *Winter fire, January embers*, he wrote. But that was a long time ago, and he probably didn't feel the same way anymore.

"I wish it could be me."

They were quiet. The greatest thing about being drunk was how heavy her limbs felt, opposed as how light her head was. She imagined the Barrens around them – she felt underwater.

Bev was sure that Ben had misinterpreted his feelings for her. The kiss that brought her back from the deadlights, the postcard filled with passion – it was all behind. She was the first one to smile at him on school, that made an impression. But he wasn't in love with her. Bev was sure of that. She knew love. The edge of desire in it. The way her father looked at her. The way Bill had looked at her – it wasn't scary, but it was identifiable. She knew Richie never had *loved* her that way, but he had desired her. Ben was not like that.

"I don't wanna give my heart to anyone," she whispered. It was true. She wanted it for her. It was safer that way.

"That's okay," Richie said. "As long as you treat it tenderly."

And so, Bev kissed him.

She knew he had never kissed anyone. They played truth or dare weeks before, and only her, Bill and Ben had kissed. Mike said that the Portuguese word for *kiss* was *beijo*, and Richie asked if there was any word for *kiss* that started with an R, or if he would die without kissing anyone. Then he proceeded to pretend he was going to try to kiss Eddie, telling him that they should help each other out. Bev didn't laugh at him that day, only realized how bad Richie was at the pretending game.

He was surprised at first, but she didn't back off and he gave into the kiss. Bev noticed that he didn't move, except for his lips. She felt good about it, something akin to power. Maybe Richie knew that she needed it more than him.

They stopped. Stared at each other. For a second, she felt afraid that Richie would notice that it was not about him. But then he blinked and began to laugh. She followed him.

"How was it?," she asked, still giggling.

"I'm honoured to have been kissed by the coolest person on Derry," Richie booped her nose. "After me, of course."

She pinched his arm. They were good.

(later, resting on her bed, bev was sure that she should've felt bad, because she wasn't kissing him out of yearning, she wasn't kissing him out of love. it was just something she wanted to do for her, in a confusing way. it was not about him. it was about her, claiming to herself a thing she couldn't name yet. agency, maybe. ben was the one kissing her, bringing her to life. bill was the one kissing her, before she kissed him back. bev wanted to try, wanted to know how would feel, being the one to start that kind of contact.

richie had just let her. bev realized that he probably never had that kind of worry, that someone could just come and grab a part of him and take it away. she tried to erase her father's face from behind her eyelids, but it was impossible, so she stayed with her eyes opened until the first sun rays crossed her window.)

“What about this one?” Mike asked, raising the T-shirt. Bev looked at it. Deep blue, the color of Bill’s eyes.

“It will fit you perfectly,” she answered. They were shopping together. The thrift store close to her house had received new donations, so she and Mike went there. Mike was the best company for shopping. He was patient and honest, and the fact that he took so much time choosing books to read made him comprehend the rituals involving buying nice used clothes.

Beverly loved clothes. Every year, near Christmas, she could go to the shopping mall and pick one single garment for her. It would be new, smelling of the perfume of the store. Nothing to sew when she got home, no need to wash it before using. It was always something that suited her graciously. She tried to take her sweet time choosing it, but sometimes Alvin was there, and he was not very patient. Even so, go thrift shopping was more like her. Probably because she was so used to it, but mostly because the clothes had history in them. They’ve had already lived with someone else. They were washed before exposed, but if she smelled them, she could almost feel the life within it.

Bev knew that that’s what she wanted to do. Give people that feeling when picking clothes to wear, that warmth new clothes lacked off.

“Bev!,” Mike called. He had an excited smile on his face. “Look!,” proudly, he extended her a skirt. Bev felt her mouth opening. It was perfect, out of a ‘50s movie. She put it close to her body. It was high-waisted and ended on her knees. And more than that, it had a little yellow flowers print, against the black. She loved it. She kissed Mike on the cheek.

“Nice one, Mikey!”

Bev soon noticed that she wasn’t hesitant to touch Mike like she was with the other boys. Actually, Eddie and Mike were the easiest ones for her. Both of them never looked at her like *that*, and from what she knew about Sonia Kaspbrak, she and Eddie had an awfully lot in common. Not that they ever discussed it, but it was there, every time Sonia called him her Eddie-bear, every time she didn’t let him pick up the phone. Mike had the most awesome parents in all town of

Derry, and that probably made him one of the best people on Earth. He was so effortless to be around, to touch. There was something so undemanding about him, Bev sometimes just wanted to let her body rest against his.

Of course, all her boys were safe. She held hands with Richie when they were walking side by side. She got up on Stan's back when they were inside the water, and stood there, pretending to be a koala. She let her head fall on Ben's shoulder when they were sitting on the couch, and more than one time she woke up drooling in his lap. She hugged Bill's waist and aspired his perfume when double riding Silver. They never touched her in a wrong way, in a way that made her feel disturbed. But that came with trust, with holding each other's bloody hands, with noticing that they never tried to take anything from her that she didn't want to give. With Mike and Eddie, there was never the need of paying attention. She just knew that they would never do anything wrong to her, not even by accident.

She looked at Mike and wondered if he felt something similar to her. She imagined what would be like, having a female friend. Had he ever imagined how could be his life, having at least one black friend? The Losers were great, they were the most important people on Earth, but still she and Mike had to tell Richie that some of his Voices weren't fun at all. And they knew they were right about this, but even so, both of them were nervous, like they were the ones doing something wrong in asking a friend to stop doing things that hurt them.

Richie apologized profusely and stopped immediately. And Ben didn't say anything, but he stopped with the fat jokes altogether. After, Eddie talked to Bev and Mike, and told them that years before he had asked Richie to stop making fun at the expense of Stan's Judaism, and Richie acted the same way he did with Bev and Mike. She remembered saying that was kinda fucked up how glad they were that Richie wasn't mad at them, and Mike agreed.

"Oh, Rich would love that one," Mike drew her attention once more. He was holding a The Cure T-shirt, that once may have been of a deep black, but it had been washed so many times that it was beginning to discolor. *The Head on the Door* cover was printed on the back of it, not on the front.

"I will never forgive Robert Smith for making a song called *Six different ways*," she said, taking it on her hands.

"Why?," Mike asked. She looked at him and smiled. He already knew the answer.

"It should have been *seven*, of course."

Bev was swinging in the hammock.

They couldn't swing very hard, or very fast. Ben was great, but he was still a kid and that still was an underground house. She looked at him, playing cards with Stan and Eddie. If she squeezed her eyes, she could see them as adults. Not with the same accuracy that she could in the last days of the summer of '89, but it was still there, a foggy memory – Bill's hair a little longer, Richie's glasses still thick. She tried not to think about Stan, about not seeing him with them. About the nightmare, the bathtub, the blood.

"She's so cool," Bev heard Richie whisper. Mike sat by his left and Eddie by his right, and he had a magazine on his hands. Bev observed the way Richie's knee touched Eddie's thigh.

"She looks just like Robert Smith on that one," Eddie pointed at the end of the page. "They could be twins."

"You're saying that because of the hair," Richie said.

"Am I? Mike, do they look alike or not?"

"All whites look alike," Mike answered, wisely.

"Told ya," Eddie smiled victoriously. Richie showed him his tongue. Bev started laughing and the three of them looked at her. Richie threw the magazine at Bev. She caught it while still on the air.

"That's our Marsh!," Richie cheered. Bev gave him a smug smile. She always won over them when they were throwing rocks on the Barrens – her throws were the most precise, her aim still the better of the group. "Beverly Marsh, soon-to-be the youngest rockstar of America," Richie used his radialist Voice. "What is your opinion on

Siouxsie Sioux looks? Would you compare this astonishing woman to the saddest man on the country, also known as Robert Smith?"

She looked at the magazine, even thought she didn't need to. Bev had stared at photos of Siouxsie for too much time. There was something so hypnotizing about her, her black hair, her red lipstick, her eyeliner, her voice – everything on Siouxsie was spellbinding, if Bev would say so. Sometimes, she wanted to look like her so badly that she woke up earlier to do the makeup before school. But Bev always washed her face clean. Red lips and black eyes wouldn't do her any good at the corridors, even if the Losers were by her side. And she lacked the hair. Siouxsie's hair was a force of its own. Black haired girls seemed to be more badass, on Bev's humble opinion.

"Richie, you love The Cure," Eddie said, before she could answer.

"You cried listening to *Closedown* five times last month," Mike added.

"Am I prohibited of having emotions?," Richie stood up, opening his arms exaggeratedly. Now Bill and Ben looked at him, while Stan shook his head. "A man should be allowed to cry while thinking about the woman he loves...", he looked at Eddie. "If only I could *fill* Sonia Kaspbrak with *love*..."

"Richie!"

"If you know what I mean...", somehow, Richie said the last word as if there were at least twenty suspension points by the end of the sentence. They were all laughing, as Eddie stood up to face Richie, that hugged him. "I'll love you as my own son, Eds, I promise you."

"I'm gonna kill you!," Eddie exclaimed, but he was laughing too. He always was laughing when it came to something that Richie said, even the *your mom* jokes. Bev smiled, looking at the way Richie pressed Eddie against him, Eddie shaking his body to get away from the hug, but not really. She observed, not for the first nor for the last time, that they weren't very good at the pretend game.

"Mike, help me!"

“Coming!,” said Mike, but instead of releasing Eddie, he hugged him too. Bill was the next one, and then they were all hugging, with Eddie caught in the middle. Bev howled with laughter.

“Marsh! Join us or you’ll be the next!,” Richie screamed. She got up on a jump and went on hugging them.

Sometimes – maybe – without pretending – love could be easy.

(her heart was hers only, she didn’t want to give it to anyone – but the losers were not any people. they were part of each other. they shared blood, she remembered. to share pieces of each other's heart were much more easier. when eddie put his arms around her, when she and richie shared a joint, when ben talked to her about a book, when stan drew birds in the corner of her notebook, when bill braided her hair, when mike bought her those cookies she liked.

they would never harm her, they would never break her heart. but if they did it someday, she would forgive them in a heartbeat. she would do it all – fight an evil clown, stand up for herself, jump from the cliff, hold their hands – over again.)

“I was talking to your aunt,” Elfrida said, getting in the kitchen.

Bev didn’t lift her head. She was sewing Mrs. Evans dress. Since her mother was diagnosed, Bev started doing works here and there. She was the favorite seamstress from the neighborhood. She also picked up a part-time job at the ice cream shop nearby Ben’s house. It was good, because despite dealing with clients being insufferable, Ben was always there, sitting on the corner table, reading a book or doing summary of school subjects to help her.

“She... Wants to move here,” Elfrida sat by her side. That captured Bev’s attention.

It had been almost three years since Bev stayed at her aunt's home. She missed Elspeth every single day and called her every weekend. The best thing about it was that even when she didn’t call, Elspeth called. She had come to visit four or five times, always with Sandra.

Bev got nervous, thinking that her mother wouldn't treat Sandra gently, but she was positively surprised by Elfrida getting along with Sandra, more than she did with Elspeth. Then, she discovered that her mom was the one introducing Sandra to her aunt.

That made Bev so happy – a happiness that she didn't understand complete, happiness to know that her mom had pieces of personality that had not been stained by her father, happiness to know that her mom was cool about Elspeth and Sandra. A secret happiness that came from the times she looked at girls and wondered, wondered, wondered, her heart beating fast, trying to focus on something other than glossed lips and soft skins.

"Sandra is a doctor, so she could help. And I feel really terrible about not being able to support you in the house work."

Bev noticed that her mother was asking for her permission and she hated her father a little more. Elfrida never could make decisions at home and she most likely had forgotten how to make them, how to be the one who owned her own life. Bev wanted to be good to her mother, and that was the reason she did everything she could do to help, but at the same time, it was so hard to forgive her for everything. Rationally, she knew it wasn't Elfrida's fault. The evil lied with his father. But she wasn't all reason, and she couldn't help the rancor whispering inside her brain that her mother could have defended her, could have walked away, could have put an end to everything, before Bev being the one to finish the cycle in the worst possible way.

"I think that this is a great idea, ma," she said, trying a smile. Elfrida seemed relieved. She gave Bev a kiss on the head.

"I love you, darling. Thank you so much," Elfrida whispered against her hair. Bev felt her eyes flooding with tears she wouldn't let fall. She just wanted to forgive her mother completely, but the bad blood that ran in her simply didn't let it happen.

"Love you too," Bev answered, knowing it was true, but not enough.

(she understood her mother, she truly did. beverly marsh was one

empathetic girl. sometimes it took only a glance for her to know that stan was feeling bad, or that richie needed her shoulder. it was easier to help and forgive friends than parents. she understood her mother, and she knew that elfrida didn't have the means to get out of the relationship. maybe alvin would end up killing her and bev.

she would forgive elfrida, one day. she was certain of that. but that day had not arrived yet.)

“You’re worried.”

Bev raised her eyes from Ben’s notebook to look at him. When Ben talked to her, there was something in his voice that made her want to hug him. Not only to her, actually. If Bev would analyze it, the seven of them had each their own type of kindness. Ben’s was a soft tone in his voice, the way he looked at you like you were the only thing in the world. Ben *cared*. Ben was always gentle and polite, the favorite of every teacher – that made other students hate him. They didn’t know Ben, they didn’t know that this was just the way he was. Always the first one to offer you a hand, always the first one to try to help.

She let her head fall on the table. “I just... I’m tired,” it was the truth. She was tired. Elspeth and Sandra hadn’t moved in yet, they would probably wait until the end of the year. So there were nights when Bev could not sleep, but also could not rest in the particular way of hers, being still even with her eyes open. She had to hold her mother’s hair while Elfrida threw up. Her mom looked sorry, whispered to her that no child should have to see their parents like this. Bev agreed, and thought about Mike. Willian Hanlon had been diagnosed almost at the same time as Elfrida, and Frank Kaspbrak had died of cancer, what made Bev wonder if their sickness had been chosen by an unknown force or something like that.

Perhaps it was just their bad luck.

“We should take a break,” Ben suggested. They were studying for an Spanish test. Bev liked to be in classes with Ben. He was so hardworking. And it was fun to observe him paying attention to class, he didn’t even notice that when he wasn’t writing what the teacher

was saying, he begun to draw those magnificent structures. Buildings, houses, bridges.

“Don’t try me,” she smiled. Ben’s ears became pink.

It was funny. In the beginning, when Bev, Ben and Mike were adjusting to the new group, he almost never looked at her. If he ever did, it was only when she wasn’t looking. Bev didn’t even register that he could have a thing for her until they were down on the sewers and Ben kissed her back to life. He probably got over it when they defeated Pennywise – the same way Bill did. Bev was sure that in the moment someone really knew her, they realized that there wasn’t much in her to be loved.

She knew it was an unfair thought – they loved her, and she loved them. She was certain of that. But that other kind of love, it just vanished. It didn’t bother her. Husband-wife love never was good for her mother, it wouldn’t be good for her. The Hanlons, the Toziers, the Uris seemed to be contrary evidence, but Elfrida and Alvin were closer to her. And there was Sandra and Elspeth, of course. Wife-wife love. Maybe things could be different for her family.

But – there was this day, when she, Ben and Eddie went drinking frappes and she sat in the middle of them, and Eddie ordered a strawberry one and Ben a coffee one, and she drank of them both. They laughed a lot that day, and they run while holding hands. It was one of the sweetest memories of her life, because the day before her father had hurt her and the pain – not on her skin, the pain that lived inside – wouldn’t go away. But with Ben and Eddie by her side, she felt really okay, like everything would turn out fine.

After that day, Ben started to be more at ease with her. It was more than nice, to have him like that. She felt she didn’t have to worry about hurting his feelings or being uncomfortable because he was paying the wrong kind of attention to her.

“I’m serious,” he closed his notebook. “I can see you’re drained... Actually, I thought... Maybe I could help you with the sewing thing?,” Ben was hesitant. Bev yawned.

“How? Taking the orders for me?,” she gave him her well-known

teasing smile. "I'm almost dead doing only my neighborhood's ones..."

Ben's cheeks were glowing red.

"I-Please, don't find that super weird, but-," he took a deep breath. "My mom-she, it's just that..."

"Ben, I'm not gonna find you weird," Bev assured him. And she was really curious. "Not more than I already do, but we both are weirdos, so."

"I can sew. I learned it with my mom. So, I can help you. I'm not as good as you, of course, but- the easiests mends sure help I can," Ben finished on his Yoda way, that he used only when he was too afraid of sounding weird. Richie taught him that – if you think you're saying something weird, say it like Yoda, so people will focus on that rather than on what you're saying.

Bev was amazed.

You're a really good guy, she remembered Richie saying. And cool guys didn't know how to sew. It was a girl thing. Girls sewed and girls cried (she never cried in front of them after the summer of '89, even though she knew they wouldn't look down on her for that) and girls were scared of everything (Bev was always on the front line, always standing up, always showing that she could handle anything by herself).

She was tempted to not accept it. It was against her rules. They had already saved her once. Bev was not a damsel in distress. Rationally, she was aware they didn't think of her in those terms. Mike had said, back when they were still getting to know each other, that she could scare even his mom, and Jessica Hanlon was no easily scared person. They respected her. They loved her. They knew her.

But it was like Pennywise had put something inside of her. Doubt. If she behaved in some ways, she would be reduced to – girl, not human. Not like them. Bev thought about all the times she saw Eddie cry, not ashamed of his tears. Bev thought about the times she saw Stan cry, ashamed, but not hiding from her. Bill, crying because of

guilt, because of grief. Even Mike, when Mrs. Hanlon got ill. He cried on her shoulder. But she couldn't allow herself the same.

Bev looked at Ben. Sweet Ben. Always so kind, so prone to help. Everyone, not just her. She remembered when he helped Mike on the farm, how he got sunburnt, and how he just shrugged it all off.

She extended her hand. Ben took it.

"If you regret this at any moment, you can stop."

He was grinning. "I won't."

And Bev believed him.

(and so, she and ben would sit side by side on her bedroom floor, listening to music and sewing. ben pierced his fingers a lot at the beginning. after the first time they sewed together, when he got to school, richie asked if he was boxing or something like that – lots of bandages on his hands. he smiled and told the truth. bev was surprised by that, imagining he would be ashamed to admit what he was doing. but ben told the truth and richie didn't crack any jokes and eddie took her hand while they walked on the corridor and bev felt good, at peace with herself.)

While Ben and Bev sewed some shirts – she felt a little bad because he didn't want to get paid, even if he deserved to, and they made a deal that the ice cream Bev could have for free once per month would go to Ben. He wasn't satisfied with that, said he didn't want anything, but Bev threatened him with a needle and he accepted it, laughing –, Eddie read out loud *Frankenstein*.

"I feel sorry for him," Bev said. Eddie had just read the passage where the Monster asked Frankenstein to make it – him? – a company. "I mean... He just wants to be loved."

"Agreed. Victor sucks," Eddie said. He was sprawled on her bed. Bev loved Eddie very much. She felt they shared a lot, even when they didn't discuss it. Eddie would never trash talk Sonia Kaspbrak, he

probably didn't think his mother deserved it. Sometimes, that made her feel bad for the wrong reason – if Eddie was able of loving his mom despite everything, why couldn't she love Alvin Marsh? Why couldn't she completely forgive Elfrida?

"Ouch," Ben whispered. He took his index finger to his mouth and sucked the blood.

"Ben, don't do that! You don't have healing saliva, do you?," Eddie was quick on his feet. Bev kept the first aid kit on her dressing table. Eddie was talking really fast about the dangers of infection, sitting in front of Ben and cleaning his finger. Bev was smiling, and so was Ben.

"It's not that bad."

"It's not that bad," Eddie mimicked. "The last thing he said before we had to amputate his finger. Here, it's done."

"Thank you, doctor," Ben gave him the thumbs up. Eddie blushed.

Bev loved so much being with them. From the beginning, Eddie never made her feel observed. He was simply so easy to be around. He always laughed at anything, even the jokes he didn't understand. Eddie liked to hug her and caress her hair, and it felt nice, it felt really nice to be taken care of. And Ben, Ben never asked her anything, only her presence. When she was with them, she felt she could relax. There was no problem in being a girl.

"I think we should-"

"Stop a little?," Eddie smiled at her. She nodded. Ben laughed.

"You guys always wanting to take breaks."

"You spoiled me," Bev answered.

"We should party," Eddie went to the radio. Bev was already standing up.

"I didn't know that party side of yours," Ben smiled.

"A party in honour to Frankenstein's Monster. Did you know that Richie cried reading that book?"

"We should call him to the celebration, then," Bev said, and saw Eddie's cheeks going pink.

Instead of answering, he turned on the radio. Eddie let out a shout of joy. *Running just as fast as we can, holding on to one another hand*, the voice filled the room. She and Eddie held hands, and extended their free ones to Ben, who laughed and took them, getting up. Tiffany almost could not be heard over the sound of the three of them singing together.

"I think we're alone now, the beating of our hearts is the only sound."

And it was true that Bev didn't like her house very much. Elfrida was in her room, maybe sleeping, so they didn't turn the volume too loud. Alvin Marsh presence seemed to be everywhere. But when she was with them, all the places became brighter, cleaner. They giggled and spun, singing together and her house didn't look so haunted anymore.

"Can I tell you something?"

"Of course."

They were birdwatching together. Well, Stan was birdwatching, Bev was finishing *Frankenstein*. The essay was due by the end of the week and she had made some notes on what she was going to write about – how funny it was that Victor called his creation a Monster, even though he was the one who abandoned the poor Creature in the first place. Fathers who denied their children love were to blame.

She closed the book and looked at him. It was very unlike Stan to stop birdwatching to talk. That was one of the reasons she liked to go with him when she had to concentrate. Bev enjoyed his silent company, and enjoyed even more how vibrantly he talked about the birds he saw when they were heading home.

Stan seemed to be distressed. She felt the urge to reassure him that

everything was okay, despite the fact that she didn't know what he was going to talk about. For some reason, Bev felt nervous. When they were younger and fought It, they used to sense some things. She remembered the way Richie took off his glasses before the rock war, the way he simply answered that he didn't know when she asked why he had done that.

At that moment, Bev felt afraid for Stan. If she was going to worry about her nightmares, she would have to worry about all of them (and she did). But she remembered very clearly the day by the Barrens, when Stan made them promise that everyone would come back to fight It again if It was not dead. That day, before cutting his own palm, Stan pretended to cut his wrists, a sick smile on his lips.

"You already look worried," there was a beginning of a smile on his face. The sad kind of smile. "It's nothing."

"I'm worried because you look..." she couldn't finish. *Erased* would be the word. Almost like he was already gone.

"I'm having nightmares."

Bev blinked. "Me too."

"I'm telling you because Richie yelled at me that I trusted no one about them. And I trust all of you, but," Stan took a deep breath. "I thought that maybe you would understand better."

She knew Stan saw something on the sewers that he didn't tell anyone. Bev knew a secret when she saw one. She doubted that Stan would ever tell what was that something – and she realized that they were similar in that aspect.

"I do," her voice came out weak. "I do," again, stronger. "I have them too."

Stan sighed. "It sucks."

"It surely does."

They looked at each other. Stan gave her his goofiest smile. She grimaced at him. They laughed a little. Sometimes, it was too hard to

talk about some subjects – nightmares, clowns, fear. But to know that someone understood you, that you had someone to talk to about them when you wanted, that you were not alone, was a relief. It was good not to have to pretend.

“Finish your book. Don’t want to see you desperate on Thursday night.”

“Watch your birds. Don’t want to see you crying because you missed one.”

She opened her book again, and then felt Stan coming closer to her. They interlocked her arms. Bev smiled. She felt safe.

Eddie appeared by her doorstep. “Bev, I was nearby and-,”

“Come in!,” she could see the blood running down his knees. “Fell from your bike?”

“Yeah,” he said, a little bit ashamed. “I was nearby and I thought that... it would be better to come here than to my house.”

“I know.”

She took him to the bedroom and gave him her first-aid box. Bev remembered the first time she met almost all of them together – Mike hadn’t arrived yet –, the way he took care of Ben. Eddie didn’t even talk to Ben at that time, but he would never deny help to anyone in need. Eddie was their healer – and their compass. And his compass heart had brought him to her house. Sometimes, healers needed assistance too.

“Let me do this,” she said, taking a piece of cotton from the roll.

“I-I got this,” Eddie shrunk when she pressed one of the wounds.

“I know you do, Kaspbrak,” Bev smiled at him. “But I can help you, and I’m going to.”

Bev knew she and Eddie mirrored each other. Helping him was helping her, in a way. Sonia and Alvin might have been different, but

their effects were similar. Even if Eddie never admitted it – sure, he got angry with Sonia and screamed at her that she had lied to him all his life. And Eddie still knew this. He wouldn't fall for her lies anymore. But she was strong, and she was still alive, always trying to cage Eddie again, trying to make him become small so she could be the only one that took care of him. Or to do whatever it was that she called “care”.

He was so strong. Bev wished he knew this.

Eddie swallowed nothing and agreed. She tried to be the most delicate she could, because he was always delicate when taking care of them. She wished he could be as considerate to himself as he was with his friends. Bev cleaned the blood, and applied the antiseptic spray, which made Eddie hiss.

“I only have Hello Kitty band-aids.”

Eddie laughed, but there was an uneasiness to it. “They’ll do.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yeah.”

Bev knew he would be too conscious about it. But she also knew that he was trying not to. She loved him so much. She wanted him to get all the things he desired in his life. They should conquer the world together.

“Here. Let me kiss you better,” but instead of kissing his knees, she kissed the top of his head.

“Thanks,” Eddie whispered.

Bev only noticed the two guys staring at her when she got close to her bike.

She was leaving the ice cream shop, her hands smelling of strawberries. She had homework to do. She would call Richie when she got home, it was their ritual. They talked to each other about everything and nothing at all, and after Richie told everyone that he

liked boys too, he started to talk to her about Eddie. And it was really nice. She loved how in love he was. Bev thought that he took too long to tell them, but she respected his time. They all did. The funny thing was that she knew that they all knew about Richie's feelings for Eddie, but they never discussed it. If Richie wasn't okay about sharing it, they wouldn't talk about it, even if he wasn't there to hear.

She took Richie to lunch with Elspeth and Sandra after that, and he was amazed by how they were around each other, and how Elfrida teased her sister. Bev knew that the Losers wouldn't be weird about her new – how to put it? – house configuration. But after Eddie's birthday, she realized she was relieved. And the look on Richie's face, the way he appeared to dare to dream after seeing her aunts... Bev felt really good that day. Maybe one day she could tell them too – but what would she say? She didn't have any girl close to her, that was probably only her imagination, a desire that came from nothing and ended up in nowhere.

(there was that day when a girl from spanish class smiled at her with real gentleness and laughed about something bev said, and she thought about it every single night before sleeping for a whole week.)

Distracted by her thoughts, Bev registered the two men as a threat when one of them put his hands on the handlebar of her bike. They seemed to be in their thirties. She didn't care. She wanted to go home.

"Get lost," Bev said. She didn't stutter. Even if she felt cold inside, Bev had fought far worse things than those two. One of them smile. The other looked at her, bored, a cigarette on the corner of his mouth.

"Where is such a pretty girl heading to? I can give you a ride," he indicated his car.

"No, thank you. Get your hands off my bike."

"Look, Reid," the talkative one sounded amused. "She's tough."

Reid shrugged. Bev frowned. She tried to pull her bike away from

him, but he held it tight.

“Let me begin again. I’m John. What’s your name?”

“None of your business,” Bev could just walk away. She could let her bike there and run to Ben’s house. She thought about Richie, beaten up, telling them that it had been nothing before telling the truth. She didn’t think that John and Reid would beat her up. If anything, they would do – she shook her head. If she thought about it, she would freeze. And Bev couldn’t freeze there.

“Just let this cunt go,” Reid said. “You can find a whore any other place.”

Bev felt furious. Bill always said that he and Stan had to take care of Richie, Eddie and Bev, because the three of them never ran from the fight, even when fighting with bigger guys. Bill wasn’t there. If he was, she doubted that those two would talk to her like that.

“But I want that one. You know I love a redhead.”

Bev remembered her father holding a lock of her red hair between his fingers, asking if she still was his little girl. She remembered cutting her hair with a rusty scissor. She remembered the blood on her bathroom, the way that Bill described it to Richie, telling him that it was like *The Shining* elevator scene.

Her rage boiled inside her. She wanted to hurt them, not to save anyone, not to avenge anyone, not for anyone, but for herself. She was tired, her mom was sick, her house was a mess because Elspeth and Sandra hadn’t had the time to organise their stuff yet. She took a deep breath and spit on his face.

He looked shocked. And then, angry. Bev wanted to laugh at his face. To tell him that an angry look on some dude she had never seen didn’t scare her. The other one looked at her puzzled. Yes, she wanted to say. *You don’t understand me, and you never will.*

John grabbed her arm. Bev remembered the rock war, the way Ben screamed at Bowers after he told them that it was easy to get on her pants.

She screamed at him, and scratched his face. Reid dropped his cigarette and went to grasp her, but Bev was fast, and she was fierce, and she was hers, only hers, she wasn't in the world for any man to seize her.

Bev ran so fast that the air seemed to be very light, she ran so fast that after a while she couldn't stop laughing. She ran so fast she felt invincible.

She stopped by the supermarket.

At her bathroom, looking in the mirror, Beverly Marsh changed.

Her head still felt light. She probably cried a little. Sandra asked her if everything was fine and Bev didn't answer, only smiled at her. She couldn't see it, but it felt like a maniacal smile. Not in a bad way – she remembered Mike telling her that *mania* was the Greek word for *madness*. Maybe she was a little bit mad. It was too easy to let go of herself, but in that moment, standing up against them, she felt more on her skin than ever. This was her. This was Beverly Marsh.

Years before – four years? So, so long? And it seemed like it all happened yesterday – she cut her hair. Her beautiful long hair. She cut it while crying. She wasn't crying now.

"I'm so ugly, that's okay 'cause so are you," she was singing to herself. She put some gloves so the hair dye wouldn't stain her hands. *"Broke our mirrors,"* Bev loved that song. Richie said that they were going to release a new album on '93. She expected so. Kurt Cobain's voice wasn't heard only on her ears. It resonated inside her, Bev felt every vibration on her heart, on her lungs. It made her feel sad. It made her feel powerful.

Voices in corridors, always judging her for hanging out with a bunch of dudes. Her father, the way he grabbed her arms, the way he hit her face. Elfrida and her long stares at her, too afraid of asking for forgiveness. The deadlights, the nightmares, the things that kept her awake at night, seeing her best friends dying over and over again. The smell of the sewers, always under her nose.

Those things didn't define her. Those things shouldn't scare her. She was Beverly Fucking Marsh.

After forty-five minutes and a shower, her black hair shined under the bathroom yellow light.

(from a very young age beverly marsh learned that fear was something that grew inside of you, as all feelings. but fear fed from your insides. she knew that if she let love grow, it would be as big as the most beautiful tree. fear rotten everything it touched. fear could make love sour. fear had the sweet smell of sickness. but fear could not be thrown away. fear was part of human nature. a natural parasite, a poison ivy on the root of other feelings.

she couldn't escape fear. no one could. but she could be – and she was – brave. and bravery, beverly knew, was the ability of trimming down fear. she was the way she was not because she was fearless. she just knew how to overcome it.)

“Bev-er-ly-fuck-ing-Mar-sh,” Richie said under his breath. Bev rolled his eyes, and he threw himself on the floor. She started to laugh. It was such a Richie thing to do.

She went to his house in the morning after the hair change because he was, after all, her best friend. And she looked really cool. Bev wanted Richie to see it – and the truth was that she would be too overwhelmed if she waited to see the six of them at once.

“Richie, close the door! It's cold-,” Maggie appeared in the corridor, and then gave Bev a big smile. “Oh my God! You look great!”

Bev put a lock of her hair behind her ears. It was not as long as it used to be, she probably would never let it grow like that again. But it was a little longer than it was in the summer of '89, over her shoulders.

On the breakfast table, Elfrida and Elspeth poured compliments on her. Sandra said that she finally had her teenage riot moment, and they all laughed. She felt really good. Bev liked changes she had

control over.

“Now come inside before you two freeze,” Maggie added. Richie and Bev went to his room.

“Seriously, it’s fucking awesome,” he closed the door behind and knelt. “Wanna marry me and get the fuck out of this town?”

“And Eddie?”

“We can bring him too. I can buy you a big full skirt with four or five petticoats underneath, and a nice wedding ring. And for him, an even nicer pair of saddle-shoes!”

“You’re so stupid,” Bev giggle, pushing him.

“And you love me.”

“Unfortunately, yeah,” she sat on the floor by his side. Richie sometimes looked like a child. Too bright, too loud. She loved him so much.

“I seriously can’t stop looking at you. Poor Ben Hanscom will have a heart attack.”

“Stop it,” Bev shook her head. She glanced at Richie and saw he was grinning. Bev didn’t usually thought that much about her appearance, not in a positive way, at least. But she was feeling good about herself. She felt like a rockstar.

“Yesterday I wondered why you didn’t call me, but if that was the reason I’m really fine about it.”

Bev weighted if she would tell him about the two gross men that harassed her the day before. Richie would want to kill them, just as she felt the urge to search for Henry Bower’s cousin and beat him to death. The truth was she wanted to feel okay about it without having to worry Richie – she was brave and she could handle things alone.

The deeper truth was that she needed Richie Tozier. His loud mouth, his weird Voices, his favorite songs, his electrifying presence. She didn’t like to know that she needed others – but it had been so long

that she had to deal with things alone. Bev thought about Ben, sewing by her side, never complaining that it was too much work to do. She thought about Eddie, always holding her close when someone said something mean on the school corridors. She thought about Mike, studying math with her, with the patience that all the teachers should have.

She wasn't alone anymore.

So Bev took a deep breath and told Richie about the night before.

(after, they locked the door and sat by the window, sharing a cigarette. richie had this weird look on his face and bev had to tease him into telling the truth – and the truth was that he was sorry that the world sucked so much and that bev had to go through those kinds of things. she told him that the world sucked for him too. to wash the helplessness away, richie put some rock'n'roll on.

bev needed him, it was true. but above all, she loved him.)

There was a knock on her door.

“Come in,” she said. Elfrida entered her room.

It was hard to look at her mother now. She was too thin, her collarbones prominent under her skin. She was too pale, her blue veins visible even from a certain distance. She had dark circles under her eyes. No more hair in her head, protected by a scarf. She looked like a ghost. The ghost of Elfrida Marsh, the ghost of the woman she once was. She remembered Mike saying that Mr. Hanlon was being eaten from the inside. It was an appropriate metaphor, and they shared an unhappy look.

Elfrida sat on her bed. Bev was listening to one of Richie's mixtapes. *I want to breath in the open wind, I want to kiss like lovers do, I want to dive into your ocean*, Annie Lennox sang.

“Beverly,” Elfrida said her name like it was her whole world, and like it cost her too much. “I know I wasn't the greatest mother to you.”

“Ma, you don’t need to talk about that,” the words fell too quickly from her mouth. Guilty – Beverly knew she hadn’t forgiven her mom when she should have, and now Elfrida was dying and to forgive her like that didn’t seem true. Could forgiveness come out of pity?

I don’t pity her. She’s my mom, Bev argued with herself, time and time again. Commiseration wasn’t a good thing.

“No, I do,” Elfrida smiled. “Elspeth and I have been talking, and she makes very clear how bad I behaved when... Well,” she took a deep breath. “Look at me. I’m your mother and my hands are sweating, as if I was a teenager again. Beverly, I don’t want to ask for your comprehension. I don’t deserve it.”

“But I comprehend. I do,” and it was true. She did understand her mother. She imagined if one day she ended up with someone like Alvin Marsh – that sour thought that came creeping in the middle of the most terrible nights. When the sun was out, Bev knew that she would never follow those steps. She had friends that loved and supported her, they would never let go of her hands. With the Losers, she was capable of everything, even overcoming the shadows from her past. But on those terrible nights, she wondered how she would behave if she married someone like him. If she was going to be like Elfrida – or if she was going to be her, and tell the man to fuck off before he could land a hand on her.

“You’re great,” Elfrida put a hand over her. “You’re so great, Beverly. I’m so happy that even when you suffered so much here, you’re still... You’re still full of kindness. You have the kindest heart that I’ve ever known.”

Bev felt tears in her eyes. She didn’t want to cry. She hated to cry. But she felt something loosening inside her – almost four years have passed since the summer of ‘89, and during those four years, close to her mother, she always felt like she was making an effort to not feel too much. Rancor, resentment, guilt, love. They had never talked like that. Bev realized that everything would be different if they did. But Elfrida wasn’t her – brave – and Bev understood that, too.

“Mom, I... I’m sorry I didn’t-”

“Please, don’t,” Elfrida whispered, touching her face. “I love you. I’m the one who’s sorry. Ever since I began to notice what he did to you, dear. I’ll always be sorry for that. For letting you handle things alone. You know, when Elspeth came the first thing she did was to throw away his photograph and I thought... I realized how bad I was still making you feel. I’m so sorry, Beverly. You don’t have to forgive me, I just need you to know that I’m truly sorry. I would have done everything differently.”

Bev bit her lip. Her mother’s image was blurry.

“But I didn’t,” Elfrida sighed. “And I’m sorry. I’m sorry I hurt you.”

Elfrida was being more than honest. Bev knew that her mother didn’t like confrontations, that she had a hard time facing what happened to them. Elfrida was being brave, on her own way.

“And you’re so grown up,” Elfrida caressed her cheek. “Tall and beautiful, and although I love your natural hair, this color really goes with you,” she smiled. Bev didn’t want to let her tears fall, but Elfrida had a stream of tears going down her face. “You’ll never be my little girl, Beverly – and I’m glad. I’m glad I can see a glimpse of the woman you will become. I love you.”

Bev threw herself on Elfrida’s arms. Her mother hugged her tightly. Elfrida was shaking with her sobs. Bev took a deep breath. She could cry, she knew she could. She didn’t have to pretend that she was okay.

“I forgive you, Ma,” she whispered against Elfrida’s ears.

She wasn’t pretending, and that was everything.

Elfrida Marsh died in July of 1993.

(bev thought that she should have forgiven her mom sooner. bev thought her mother was only waiting for her forgiveness to go. bev thought that she should have never forgiven her, then. bev realized she was an orphan. she was alone. bev realized she had elspeth and

sandra, that they weren't going to live. she wasn't alone. bev thought about all the things she could have made differently. none of them would save her mother from the sickness. bev thought and thought and thought, and she didn't cry because she was brave and strong and she could handle that.)

"Bev," Ben's voice was soft. After the funeral, they went to her house. She told them that she needed to be alone, but it was a lie. Thankfully, they all knew that.

Mike was with Sandra in the kitchen, making tea. Elspeth was in her room after taking some headache pills. Eddie was talking to Richie, their heads almost touching as they whispered to each other. *No more pretending*, she thought. Bill and Stan had gone out to buy groceries.

"I'm fine, really."

She was, in a sense. Ben gave her a sad smile.

"You don't have to be tough all the time," he said.

She looked at him, and said nothing in return.

Bev woke up after a nightmare. Her father, her mother, blood on her hands. Would this hell ever end?

She looked at the clock on her wall. Past four in the morning. Stan said he'd asked for a telephone in his room. Donald found it a funny birthday request, but gave it to him anyway. Bev went to the living room, her heart beating too fast.

She shouldn't annoy him with that.

You don't have to be tough all the time.

It was a stupid idea.

She did it anyway.

"Bev?," Stan's voice was but a whisper. She let a sound through her

nose.

“How did you know it was me?”

“Well, I’m expecting your calls since May. I asked for that phone in front of you hoping you’d take the bait.”

She laughed a little. “You’re crazy.”

“You’re crazy,” she could hear his smile. “Nightmares?”

“Ayuh.”

“I wish we could beat the shit out of that fucking clown all over again.”

“You sound just like Richie.”

“Seriously? I was trying to sound like you. My badassness role model.”

She laughed. Bev knew that she could wait for the sunrise on her bed, eyes wide open, without having to wake up Stan. But it was easier that way. It was better.

They talked until morning arrived.

They were heading to the clubhouse when the rain started to pour.

It had been two months since Elfrida died. Bev was handling things the best way she could. Sandra even talked to her about going to therapy. Bev said she didn’t need it, but went even so. She didn’t need it, but it was a good thing, talk to someone about almost everything, someone who wasn’t close to her, someone that couldn’t judge her.

“Run!,” Eddie yelled. They followed his order, until Bev stumbled.

She fell heavily on the ground. “Bev!,” Richie screamed. The rain was strong, they were soaked within minutes. She started to laugh. She felt like when they were thirteen, so young, having fun just running around each other. That summer was the first time she realized that she could be okay one day. Even with Pennywise. Even with her

father. Because she had them, she had the Losers, and their bond made everything seems possible.

And for some reason, she started to cry.

Maybe it was longing for that time, before their childhood had gone away with the black water of the sewers. She put her scarred hand over her heart. Maybe she was crying for the kids they were and the people they would become. Because of her nightmares. Because of the things that frightened her. Because of what Ben had told her on her mother's funeral day. Maybe she was crying because her butt hurt a little from the fall. Maybe she was crying because – because of Elfrida, because of all they could have been, because she took so long to forgive her mom, because she missed Elfrida so bad, because it had been so long since the last time she let someone see her so fragile, because, because.

Maybe she was crying because she was with them, and they were safe.

Bev used to think that it was too easy to let go of herself – it wasn't like that anymore.

She was crying, and she was on her skin. So present in her body that it almost hurt. She was Beverly Marsh, laying in a pool of mud, feeling the dirt sticking on her arms, letting the rain feel like tiny knives against her skin. Richie laid by her side. "You're gonna get dirty," she said, her voice weak. Crying, crying in front of them all.

"I know. I don't care," he said, and she realized he was crying too. Bill fell to her other side.

"What are you doing, weirdo?," she felt a smile beginning on her face.

"E-e-enjoying the mud with muh-muh-my best friends."

It was good, she realized. The rain. The mud. The smell of the world around her. Feeling that everything was being washed away, feeling that every wound she ever had was being cleansed. Richie sobbing by her side for God knew what. Bill touching her shoulder. It was good

to hear Eddie and Stan screaming that they would be sick, but they were still there. They would never leave them. Mike winked at her, like he knew it was something long overdue. He opened his arms to the rain.

Bev loved them. And she knew that they loved her. End of fucking story. Despite everything that had happened to her, despite everything that had happened to them, they loved each other. And love wasn't bad. Love wasn't scary. Love wasn't predatory. Alvin Marsh seemed to be a distant echo inside her head. What he had done to Bev could not be undone, but maybe it could be mended. Maybe she didn't have to live with that stain forever. They would never walk away from her.

"Just a minute more," she whispered. From minute to minute, day to day, month to month. What started in 1989 would never end. The good things would grow. The bad things would be fixed. New things would happen. And Beverly Marsh would live through them. She was more than a survivor, more than a fighter, more than a lover. She was alive.

She could be herself. She could cry when she wanted. She wasn't alone. Being brave was more than acting despite the fear, was more than acting in fear. Being brave was more than denying help, more than telling herself that she could handle things alone. Being brave was more than pretending that she was okay. Being brave was – was being herself.

Ben extended a hand to her. He had a worried look on his face. Ben, sweet Ben, always so worried about them. The first one to offer help. She knew she could get up alone. But the truth was, she didn't want to.

Bev took it.

Author's Note:

[here is the playlist updated with bev's songs!](#)

this work had like 5k words when I posted richie's.
for the next one, I have Literally One Word. hope I
don't take too long to update but... yeah. anyway if
you read all this, thank you!!